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JAPAN - SOUTH KOREA: Aid Dispute Resolved

Prime Minister Nakasone will visit Seoul next week to announce that Japan and South Korea have solved their aid dispute, which had dragged on since mid-1981.

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The US Embassy in Seoul says Japan will provide \$4 billion in economic assistance over a seven-year period. Official development assistance will be \$1.85 billion, with the remaining amount in credits from the Export-Import Bank. Tokyo has agreed to waive the normal 15-percent downpayment on purchases financed with the credits.

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Comment: Resolution of the aid issue concludes one of several efforts by Nakasone to make progress on longstanding problems early in his administration. Japan made several concessions to solve the dispute, including waiving the downpayment requirement on official credits.

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For his part, President Chun accepted substantially less than the original \$6 billion requested. His willingness to compromise suggests he is now listening more carefully to his moderate foreign policy experts and wants to take advantage of the current Japanese Government's favorable attitude toward closer bilateral ties.

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Although the loans are not critical to Seoul, they will improve South Korea's debt situation and growth prospects. In addition, Nakasone's visit to Seoul on his first foreign trip will enhance Chun's domestic and international prestige.

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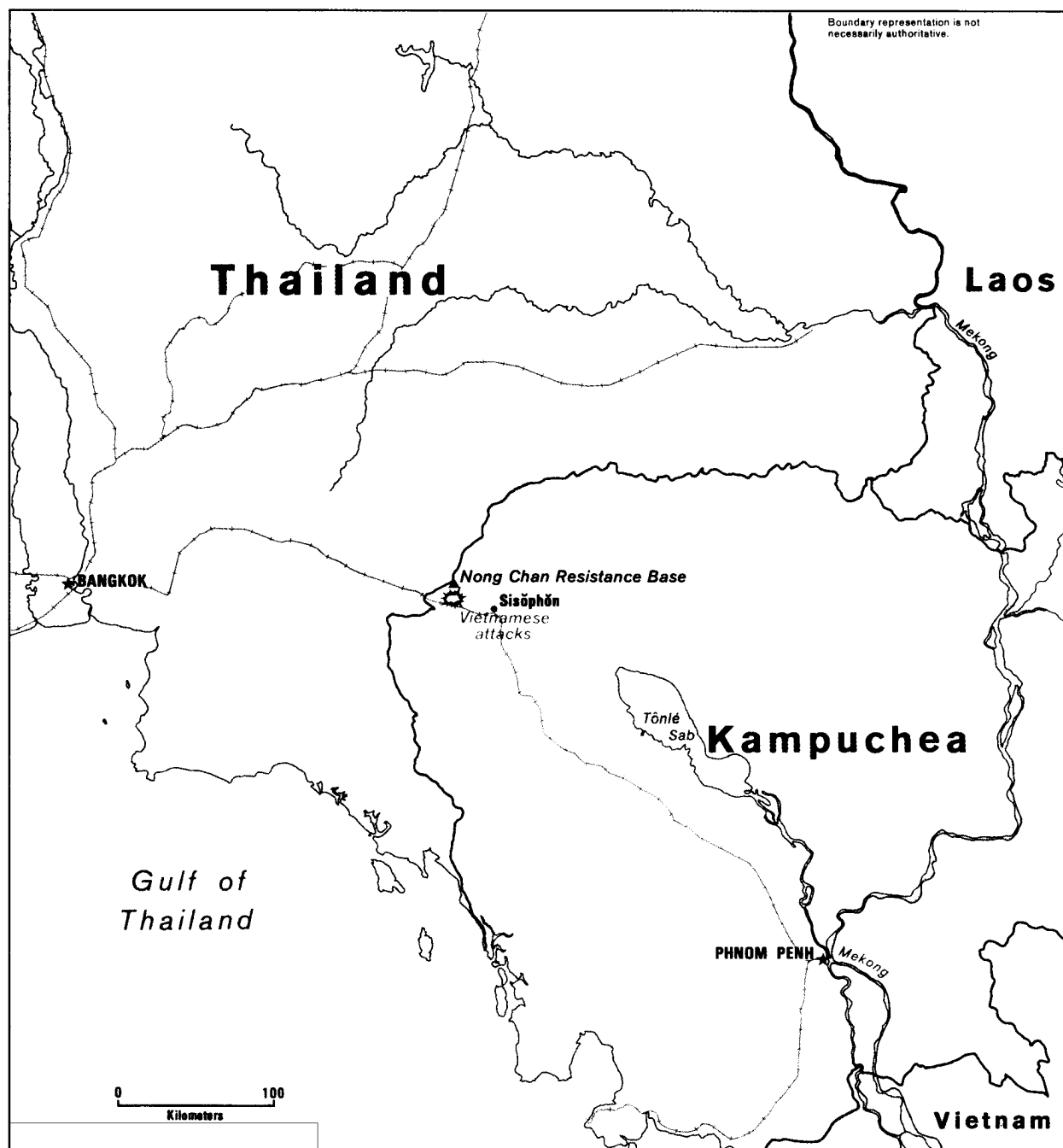
The resolution of the aid issue, the release of leading South Korean dissident Kim Dae Jung, and the resumption of Japanese-Korean talks at the parliamentary level last month indicate continued improvement in relations is likely.

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KAMPUCHEA-VIETNAM: Dry Season Fighting

The Vietnamese have strengthened their forces near main guerrilla bases in western Kampuchea, and clashes initiated by non-Communist guerrillas in recent months suggest they will be aggressive during the current dry season.

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An estimated two battalions of Vietnamese infantry supported by artillery counterattacked new non-Communist insurgent positions near Thailand last week.

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The Vietnamese recaptured several small villages near Nong Chan, a major base of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front.

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Over the past several months Front forces, based at Nong Chan, have carried out several successful hit-and-run attacks against nearby Vietnamese positions. The Front is short of ammunition and manpower, however, and is unable to hold newly gained positions.

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Comment: Front forces would be no match for a Vietnamese regimental-size attack against Nong Chan. The Vietnamese are in a better position now to engage the guerrillas' main forces.

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A Vietnamese attempt to overrun Nong Chan or other Front bases along the border could lead to clashes with the Thai.

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USSR-VATICAN: Conciliatory Remarks

A Soviet television commentator on Monday claimed charges of Moscow's involvement in the assassination attempt on the Pope are intended "to set Catholics against Communists." He asserted the effort would fail and Catholics and Communists would fight together against the "military threat to peace." [redacted]

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Comment: In taking this conciliatory line, the commentator backed away from the intemperate criticism of the Pope in Soviet media last week and implicitly acknowledged Vatican efforts supporting disarmament. The earlier, more harsh remarks may have been intended by the Soviets to show that such allegations would not deter them from criticism of what they consider to be papal meddling in Eastern Europe. The latest commentary, however, suggests they now realize their criticism undermined both their denials of complicity in the assassination attempt and their efforts to influence the "peace" movement in Western Europe. [redacted]

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WEST GERMANY: Setbacks for Moderate Social Democrats

Local Social Democratic Party organizations have refused to renominate the leader of the moderately conservative "Kanalarbeiter" faction and the party's parliamentary foreign policy spokesman as candidates for the Bundestag in the election likely to be held on 6 March. Party regulations make it almost impossible for anyone not nominated by a local district to win a seat in the Bundestag. The spokesman attributes his defeat to his refusal to moderate his support of the dual decision by NATO on INF. [redacted]

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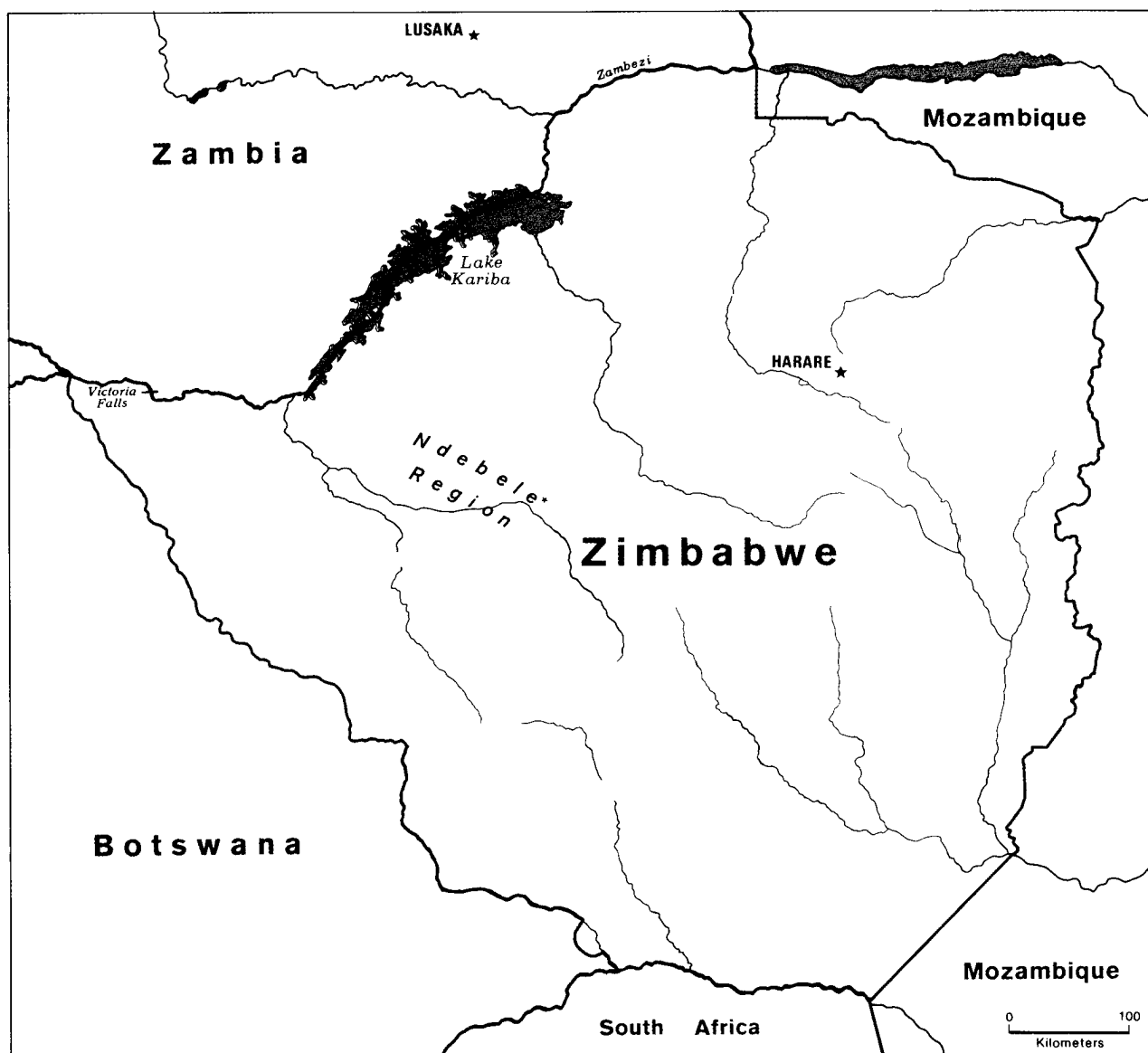
Comment: These actions will worry other moderate Bundestag deputies and could influence many Social Democrats to qualify their support for the INF decision. With the election campaign about to begin, party leaders probably are concerned over the extent of local opposition to the national party's policies. Weakened party discipline could easily allow conflicts between leftist and conservative factions to expand. [redacted]

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* The Ndebele constitute approximately 16 percent of the total population of Zimbabwe.

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ZIMBABWE: Antidissident Operations

Prime Minister Mugabe has ordered military operations against dissidents in Matabeleland, the stronghold of Zimbabwe African People's Union leader Joshua Nkomo. The move is in response to a recent surge of indiscriminate attacks by dissidents. Six whites from farming families have been killed and over 20 persons injured.

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Comment: The operation--which the press calls the largest since independence--is aimed at reassuring whites, especially farmers, who are vital to Zimbabwe's troubled economy. Mugabe also wants to placate hardliners in the cabinet who have called for retribution against Nkomo and his followers. The dissidence, however, results from resentment of the government by the Ndebele tribal minority. Excesses by troops, as have occurred in the past, would further increase opposition to Mugabe.

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